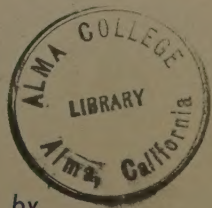


Early Portuguese Missions

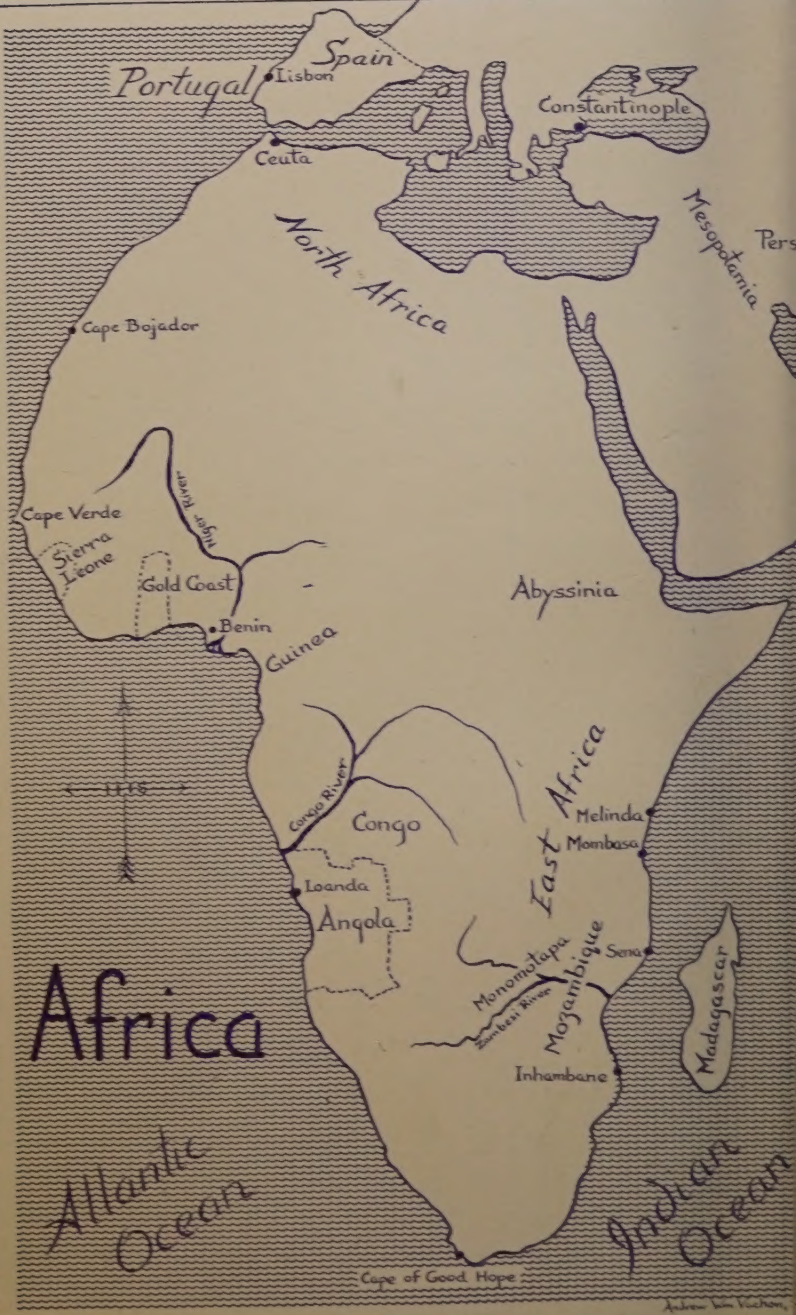
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GOA
COCHIN
MALACCA
FISHERY COAST
MACASSAR
TRAVANCORE
KAGOSHIMA
KYOTO
MOLUCCAS
SAN CIAN

A Study of Missionary Effort
from the Congo River to the
China Sea. With a Chapter
on St. Francis Xavier in the
Orient.



by

Martin P. Harney, S.J.



THE EARLY PORTUGUESE MISSIONS
&
SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER

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&

St. Francis Xavier
in the Orient

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1.

The Explorers, the Kings and the Popes

EXPLORERS, KINGS, POPES

1. After the Christian defeat of the Moslems in the 13th Century a new world was opened up to the Church challenging her missionary zeal. This challenge was met providentially by the appearance in the Church of the mendicant Orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, who undertook the work of evangelizing these new fields. They were the leaders in the missionary labors of the Near East, Persia, Mongolia, China and Northern Africa. The Mercedarians and Trinitarians assumed the heroically Christian work of redeeming captives from the Saracens.

2. The 15th Century witnessed the beginning of the vast enterprise of exploration by the Portuguese and the Spaniards. The causes for this extraordinary movement were probably the following: 'First, there was the prosecution of the war against the Moslem Arabs and Moors whom the Portuguese and Spaniards were trying to enclose or circumvent. Secondly, the Ottoman Empire had made the use of the trade routes to the East more difficult. After the capture of Constantinople the West was seeking a new and cheaper way to reestablish commercial relations with the East. Thirdly, the new ideas about the roundness of the earth had raised the hope of reaching the Far East by a western route. Fourthly, there was a romantic reason. The rumor still persisted about a Christian ruler named Prester John who had been cut off from contact with Christendom by the Turks. It was hoped that by joining arms with him Christianity might bring about the overthrow of the Moslems.

3. The first nation to embark upon this career of exploration was Portugal. John I with his sons, Duarte and Henry, occupied Ceuta on the North African coast in 1415. Then Henry, who has come to be known as the Navigator, was appointed leader of all expeditions to be made along the African shoreline. Under his encouragement, in rapid succession the following promontories were discovered: Bojador in 1434, Branco in 1441, Cape Verde in 1445. After the death of Henry the expeditions continued south along the coast to Sierra Leone (1462) and the

Gold Coast (1471). In 1484 the immense bay of Fernando Pó was explored as far as Cape Negro. In 1486 Bartholemew Diaz reached the Cape of Good Hope at the southernmost tip of the African Continent. Twelve years later Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape and by way of Mombasa and Mozambique discovered Calicut on the southwest coast of India. Pedro Cabral discovered Brazil by accident, then turned east and reached Calicut in 1500. Francisco de Almeida touched at the ports of Ormuz and Maskate on the Persian Gulf in 1507. Alfonso Albuquerque occupied Goa in 1510.

4. That a missionary impulse was involved in these explorations is revealed by the grant of great privileges to the Portuguese kings by the Holy See, in order to encourage the religious aspect of the journeys. Pope Martin V gave to Portugal the island of Madeira and granted to Prince Henry all the territories conquered and to be conquered from the promontory of Bojador to India. Nicholas V, by the Bull *Romanus Pontifex* (1454) declared that the conquered African territories belonged to Portugal and confirmed the right of conquest. Thomar, in Portugal, was the site of the central monastery of the Militiae Christi and Callistus III, in 1456, made the abbot of the monastery a Vicar with the care of souls in all newly discovered regions. The Vicar of Thomar did not have sufficient manpower to meet the demands of the expanding empire and, in 1514, the diocese of Funchal was erected, the first colonial diocese. Then the Vicariate of Thomar was suppressed and Funchal became a suffragan see with its boundaries reaching to India. In 1534 Funchal was made a metropolitan see with four suffragan sees, including Goa in India which was the first see in the colonies of the Far East.

5. The famous Line of Demarcation (Pope Alexander VI—1493) was made necessary by the Spanish explorations in the New World. This imaginary line ran from north to south 100 leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde. The Spaniards were to possess the lands discovered to the west, and the Portuguese the lands to the east of the line. By the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), confirmed by Leo X, the line was changed to 370 leagues

west of the Azores. These donations on the part of the Holy See, whatever their meaning and authority, placed the burden upon the Portuguese and Spanish rulers of working for the conversion of the new peoples discovered. They were obligated to the selection, sending and distribution of missionaries. They were granted tithes in the colonies with the duty of caring for the churches founded or to be founded in discovered lands.

6. Another grant (1508) gave the kings the right of nomination for "benefices, monasteries and pious places erected or to be erected in all the dioceses founded or to be founded." They had the right also to fix and readjust the limits of sees and parishes in their colonies. Thus arose the *Jus Patronatus* of the Portuguese and Spanish Kings which was to cause some trouble in ecclesiastical jurisdiction later on. While it may seem strange to us that the Holy See should grant such powers over the new churches to the rulers of these nations, one fact is clear: The concessions given these rulers by the Holy See prove that the explorations had a missionary intention as well as a commercial one.

2.

New Mission Fields

NEW MISSION FIELDS

CONGO

7. Before the discovery of the Azores, the Madeira and Cape Verde Islands were uninhabited. They were colonized by the Portuguese, and the Franciscans became the guardians of the faith in these new colonies. In 1462 Fr. Alphonsus of Bolano was appointed Prefect for Guinea. In 1482 Diego Cao discovered the Congo River and brought back with him four natives as proof of his discovery. In 1489 Behemai, King of Senegambia, and 24 nobles were baptized in Lisbon. It is reported that some Dominicans returned with him to labor in the conversion of the kingdom but they were later expelled. Dominicans visited Benin, near the mouth of the Niger River, but were unable to establish a mission.

8. From time to time natives of Africa were brought back to Lisbon by explorers, instructed in the Faith and baptized. Diego returned to the Congo with some Franciscans and succeeded in gaining the good will of the King of Congo and his uncle, the Duke of Sogno. In 1491 missionary priests, probably of the Congregation of St. John the Evangelist of the St. Eloy monastery, undertook apostolic work. The Duke of Sogno and his son were baptized in the presence of the King of Congo and it seemed a moment of great promise. Later the king and his family were baptized. But one son, tenacious of native tradition, stirred up trouble. The king with his rule thus endangered renounced the Faith and most of the neophytes followed him, perhaps because the Christian moral law was too restricting.

9. The king died in 1492 and a converted son, Alphonsus, succeeded him. At his request, more missionary expeditions were undertaken. Between 1508 and 1521 Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians, together with some secular priests, came to the kingdom. Henry, the son of Alphonsus, was sent to Portugal, studied for the priesthood and, in 1518, was named Bishop of Utica. After his consecration he returned to his native land but the state of Christianity was uncertain. After Henry's death

Pope Paul III (1534) made S. Thomé a suffragan see of Funchal, but the first two bishops did not go to the Congo. The clergy there rebelled against the Vicar of the Bishop so that many had to be expelled from the mission.

10. In 1547 Diogo, the new king, petitioned Rome for more missionaries and some Jesuits were sent. They opened a school and in three months there were 5,000 baptisms. This success was not of long duration because the missionaries were forced to retire from the Congo in 1570 and the country fell back into paganism. In 1591, at the request of another king, 11 missionaries returned to the Congo. In 1597 Pope Clement VIII established a see at San Salvador and the missions flourished again for a time. In 1640 the Holy See made the Congo a Prefecture Apostolic and it was entrusted to the Capuchins.

ANGOLA

11. Angola was explored after the Congo (1520). Here the Portuguese required baptism as a condition for opening commerce with the natives. Missionaries came from S. Thomé and the Congo but did not meet with much success. In 1560 some Jesuits accompanied an expedition to the region but the king expelled them with the exception of one, Fr. Goumea, who was entrusted with the education of the king's son. He remained until 1574 but accomplished nothing.

12. In 1578 another expedition was sent and succeeded in converting one of the princes. In 1584 the king was baptized with 1,000 of his subjects. Statistics of the period record 20,000 Christians in 1596. However, because of the persecutions and the lack of missionaries, Christianity was confined to Loanda where, in the first part of the 17th Century, there were Carmelites, Franciscans, Capuchins and Jesuits. There were occasional converts from Guinea, and the Jesuits worked among the slaves. It was not until the 17th Century that the work was well developed by the Carmelites in Upper Guinea and by the Capuchins in Lower Guinea.

EAST AFRICA

13. Cabral touched at the port of Mombasa in Mozambique in 1500. St. Francis Xavier, interrupting his journey to India, evangelized in Mombasa and encountered the Moslems in Melinde. Missionary work in this section was confined to the Portuguese colony because of the strong resistance of the Moslems. Franciscans came but were confronted with the same great problem. In 1559 two Jesuits came and worked toward the interior of the continent. There were some conversions, the King of Inhambane and 400 subjects accepting baptism.

14. Fr. Sylveira worked up through Sena to the Zambesi River and the kingdom of Monomotapa where the king of the realm was baptized in 1561. But through Moslem inspiration he was killed and the other missionaries went to India. In 1577 the Dominicans under Fr. John dos Santos made another expedition into the interior as far as Tete, Sena and Cafres, in spite of Moslem opposition. The Jesuits returned in 1607. At the end of the 16th Century the Augustinians were working in Mombasa and Melinde. But many hardships and constant opposition eventually led to the decay of the Zambesi mission.

MADAGASCAR

15. The first apostles of Madagascar were the Dominicans, the majority of whom were martyred between 1540 and 1558, in which last year Fr. John of St. Thomas was poisoned. In the early 17th Century a legation was sent by the Portuguese and with it went a Jesuit who built a church at Ranofotsi in 1613. This missionary, Fr. Mariano, returned to Madagascar in 1616 with the son of a native chieftan who had been taken to Goa where he was baptized. But the young man was forced into apostasy and the mission fell into ruin. Fr. Mariano tried three times to return but in vain. In 1648 two Lazarists went to the island and were succeeded by others. But the mission collapsed in 1674. These last missionaries were under the French.

ABYSSINIA

16. The legend of Prester John had stirred the imagination of the Christian West for several centuries. The location of his kingdom varied through the centuries, and at the time of the Portuguese expeditions it was thought that his kingdom was situated in Abyssinia. Entrance to the country was particularly difficult. The Mediterranean was closed by the Turks and the approach by way of East Africa was extremely difficult because of thieves, the wilderness and mountains. The first contact was by correspondence between John of Portugal and David III (1504-1540). Pope Julius III sent a patriarch, Barreto, with two auxiliaries Oviedo and Carneiro, and 10 other Jesuits. They proceeded to Goa whence a priest and Brother were sent to Africa to explore the possibilities of getting into Abyssinia.

17. In 1557 Oviedo and a few missionaries landed in Africa and got to the kingdom of the Negus. The Patriarch Barreto had died at Goa in 1562 and Oviedo had been appointed his successor. He labored for twenty years but the mission was unsuccessful and he died in 1577. Another mission was led by Paez, who may be called the apostle of Abyssinia. While trying to get to his mission he was captured by the Turks and held for ten years. Finally, in 1604, he reached the kingdom and in that year converted to Catholicism the king, Za-Dagal. The successor of this king, Selten Segued, was brought into the Faith in 1613 and his submission was sent to Pope Paul V. However, he relapsed into schism. Paez died in 1622. Again, in 1626, Segued made a retractation and submission with a solemn Profession of Faith before Fr. Mendez who was the successor of Paez. Conversions increased for a while but it can hardly be said that conditions were favorable.

18. The schismatic monks plotted continually. There were so many abuses to be corrected and customs to be reformed that it probably required more prudence and patience than the Patriarch had. He began to correct with a strong hand. He showed himself inflexible, while the representative of the schisma-

tic patriarch of Alexandria and the schismatic clergy showed themselves very tolerant of abuses.

19. At first the opposition was concealed. Then open rebellion was sponsored by Facilidas who on the death of Segued, in 1632, had become king. This ruler ordered the death of the principal Catholics and the expulsion of the missionaries. Some of the missionaries returned to India. Others remained and were killed; among them were Franciscans, Capuchins and Jesuits. The failure of the Abyssinian mission was due to many causes but principally to the caprice of rulers, the opposition of the schismatic monks and clergy, and too close association with Portuguese officials on the part of the missionaries.

INDIA

20. The Portuguese came to India in 1498 and the Church has been laboring there ever since. Yet the number of Catholics is relatively small after the gigantic efforts of centuries. The 15th Century saw the first uninterrupted effort of the Church to establish herself among peoples who were not of the white race. The big exception was the Franciscan effort among the Tartars and Chinese in the 13th Century. With the Portuguese explorations a new world and new peoples came to the knowledge of Christianity. They were different in color, religions, degrees of civilization and customs. The problem was immense and it was met heroically by countless missionaries in spite of failures and human frailty.

21. Missionaries always accompanied the Portuguese on their expeditions. Two Trinitarians went out with Vasco da Gama. A vicar, 8 secular priests and 8 Franciscans accompanied Cabral. The Franciscans under Fr. Henry of Coimbra settled in Calicut and Cochin. With Albuquerque went a vicar general, Domingo de Souse, O.P., and 5 Dominicans. Franciscans went out with Almeida. Cunha (1506) brought missionaries who remained in Socotra. However, the missionaries were so few that they could scarcely do more than care for the Portuguese colonists. The

Friars erected monasteries in all the Portuguese centers. The Franciscans were in Goa, Cochin, Mylapore, Negapatam, Bassein, Chaul and Salsette. The Dominicans were established in these places also as well as in Ormuz where Fr. John del Rosario became a distinguished missionary.

22. The Franciscans converted some Hindus in Calicut, but three of their number were martyred in the same region. The principal work of conversion was done among the Paravas on the Fishery Coast. They came into Christianity in great numbers, influenced by the help which the Portuguese gave them against their Moslem oppressors. Generally the labors of the missionaries were confined to the colonial centers because of the scarcity of numbers, ignorance of the languages and the lack of hierarchical organization. Abuses grew up which might have been prevented and corrected by an established ecclesiastical authority. Goa was administered by an apostolic Commissarius and was not made a see until 1553. In 1557 the famous Franciscan, John Alphonsus Albuquerque, was made Bishop of Goa and his jurisdiction reached from Goa to the Cape of Good Hope and all the Orient.

SYRO-MALABAR CHRISTIANS

23. The first Franciscans made contact on the southwest coast of India with the Malabar Christians who claimed descent from Christians evangelized by St. Thomas the Apostle. The Bishop of the Malabars at the time, Mar Jacob, considered himself in communion with the Holy See and not Nestorian or heretical, as some believed. In 1490 no bishops were left in the region. Three Malabars were deputed to go to Mesopotamia to obtain bishops from the Patriarch there. From Mar Simeon of Mosul they obtained two bishops, Mar Thomas and Mar John, who came to India. Later Mar Thomas returned to Mesopotamia. Mar Simeon of Mosul died and was succeeded by Mar Elias. From him Mar Thomas obtained three bishops, one of whom was Mar Jacob who was in Malabar when the Portuguese arrived.

24. Documents have come to light in recent years which seem to prove that these Christians were not heretical when the

Portuguese arrived. There are extant three letters of Mar Jacob, one written to the Patriarch of Mesopotamia describing the condition of the Church in India and calling the Portuguese, recently arrived, brothers in the Faith; the other two written to John of Portugal.

25. It seems certain that Christianity existed in Malabar from the 4th Century. Fr. Marignolli, O.F.M., the Legate for Oriental Territories, speaks of having met some of these Christians in Colombo in 1348. When the Portuguese came to India, they began to insist on the necessity of the Latin Rite. A letter of St. Francis Xavier to the King of Portugal (January, 1549) speaks of an Armenian bishop who has served the king faithfully for forty years but who has been sadly neglected by the King's officials. Xavier showed great respect for this bishop, who, he wrote, followed the customs of our Holy Mother, the Roman Church.

26. Great difficulties arose from the attempted Latinization of these peoples. But worse trouble arose from the attempted Portugalization. The Synod of Diamper decreed the complete destruction of all their liturgical Syrian books under the contention that they were heretical. Many of the people accepted the Latin Rite but they detested the identification of the Latin Rite with Portugal. Portuguese missionaries were obstructed in their efforts, while the Italian Carmelites were much better received by the people. The Goa Inquisition showed itself difficult by its constant suspicion of the Malabars. As dislike for the Portuguese grew, the Malabars turned more and more to the Chaldeans. This is an unfortunate page of misunderstanding and excessive nationalism on the part of the Portuguese.

27. It is true that the books of the Malabar Church did contain vestiges of the Nestorian heresy. This should not be a cause for consternation. The Malabars did not understand Syrian and so they could not have understood the arguments of Nestorianism. They did not know theology. Hence from contact with Nestorians who came early to the East certain errors had crept into their liturgical books. But they had been separated so long from any

contact with the Roman Church that naturally they would adhere to what was at hand. It seems quite certain now that they were and desired to be genuine Catholics at the time of the Portuguese arrival.

SUMMARY OF INDIA MISSION

28. All the missions in India had been confined to the coast where the Portuguese settlements were situated. The missions to non-believers suffered considerably from the disedifying lives of merchants and colonists. At one time the Jesuits were so discouraged that they thought of abandoning the Indian mission, but the move was disapproved by the General, Fr. Lainez.

Perhaps a brief summary of the problems and policy will help to an understanding of the difficulties. A letter of John III of Portugal to John di Castro, Governor of Goa, announces the royal policy towards the missions. The missionary is, as it were, at the service of the king who has been burdened with the spiritual care of these new peoples by the Holy See. The king commanded that no idolatry be tolerated but forcibly rooted out. Temples and idols were to be destroyed and burned. No help was to be extended to pagans. Non-believers might be attracted by gifts and prizes of earth as well as of heaven. No revenue was to be exacted of neophytes, and favors were to be granted only to Christians. Catechumens should be provided with food. If converts were expelled from their homes, they were to be cared for out of the royal funds. Schools should be established for the teaching of religion and the pagans should be forced to attend. This is enough to indicate there was a strange mixture of force and Christian charity in the policy. Some of the royal prescriptions were harsh and ill-advised.

29. It must also be remembered that one of the motives of Portuguese expansion was to overcome the Moslem control of the commercial centers of the East. Thus the centers established by the Portuguese were trade centers. The policy in vogue in Europe at the time was "*cuius regio, illius religio*" and Portugal followed that policy in the colonies. Many of the leaders seemed to have

no regard for difference of race and customs but sought to impose one form on all. They paid no heed to the problems of the peculiar social structure but looked upon the castes with European eyes, conceiving them to be much as the various strata of society in Europe.

30. At times the methods of evangelization were the result of conditions in Europe where force and war were being employed. The result too often was an enforced Portugalization of the people religiously, socially and politically; even to the extent of converts being called Portuguese and taking Portuguese names so that Christianity seemed to the natives to be a mere external form.

31. The Christians were localized and their religion did not advance beyond the borders of Portuguese occupation. Christianity suffered from the beginning because of circumstances. Religion was compromised in the eyes of the natives by its identification with Portugal. It was considered a Portuguese thing. The poor example of colonists and soldiers as well as ignorance of and contempt for native customs made Christianity undesirable. The missionaries were not well prepared for their work. Not many learned the native languages so that instruction had to be given through interpreters.

32. There was a lack of system and organization while, at times, the work was superficially done. Many converts were baptized without instruction or with a minimum of knowledge, and oftentimes after baptism they were left to themselves. There was no attempt of any proportion to build up a native clergy, though a college for that purpose was begun at Goa in 1541. European regulations were often set up too mechanically. The Christianity thus established was in many cases crude and external, lacking interior conviction and real penetration with the Christian spirit.

33. One must keep in mind that the Church was, in a way, attacking an entirely new problem. The long distance from home and the almost complete absence of inter-communication made it all but impossible to pool experiments and to draw up

a changing method. It was therefore impossible to avoid mistakes. Some of the missionaries, such as the Franciscan Antonio do Porto, worked along systematic lines and exercised great care in handling the natives. The development of a native clergy was a new problem for the missionaries of these centuries which they did not solve. All the early missions were handicapped as well as benefited by the Royal Patronage. A tremendous undertaking was committed to the kings and it is difficult to see how Christianity could have been supported and maintained in any other way than by enlisting the interest and responsibility of rulers.

34. However, there grew out of the system a too great dependence upon the colonizing governments and a tendency to use the missions for the benefit of expansion. As long as government was in the hands of zealous Catholics the obstacles could be kept to a relative minimum. But when, in later centuries, government was under the control of indifferent Catholics, and especially the Masonic disciples of the French Enlightenment, the system became more of an evil than a good. It was the source of conflict between Spain and Portugal and, therefore, between the missionaries subject to these two jurisdictions, especially when they began to work in the same area, as in Japan and China.

THE MOGUL EMPIRE

35. Two interesting attempts were made in India, one to the interior and away from Portuguese influence, the other among the Brahmins. The first was the attempt to convert the great Mogul, Akbar, whose empire controlled the northern part of India and was Moslem. In 1576 Akbar sent a legation to the Portuguese asking for two missionaries to bring the Christian law and Gospel to his people. It seemed to be an important opportunity because the reasons apparently were religious, not political or commercial. Three Jesuits were sent in 1580.

36. It is likely that Akbar had two personal reasons for the invitation: one, to give some satisfaction to his own unsettled mind and the other, to form another religion for his empire. He

thought that Christianity might be a "via media" acceptable to Hindus and Moslems. At times he seemed to adhere to Christianity; at other times he would lose interest. His mind was eclectic. The missionaries were called upon to debate with the Moslem leaders and the Mogul was deeply impressed with the clarity of the Christians and the confusion of the Moslems. He expressed a desire for baptism and permitted the construction of a small chapel in his palace. However, Superiors at Goa recalled the missionaries because Akbar's dissimulation was becoming evident. One missionary remained and to him the Mogul entrusted the education of his son. The missionaries had felt that he was playing with them, that he wanted to found a religion of his own.

37. In 1591 a second legation of missionaries was petitioned by Akbar. Two priests and a Brother were sent and a school was opened for Akbar's son and the sons of the nobles. The missionaries soon saw that the motive was not conversion. On the occasion of a threatened general revolt they returned to Goa, though both their Superiors and the King were displeased. In 1595 Akbar wrote again to the Viceroy of India requesting missionaries.

38. The Jesuit Superior was loathe to send missionaries because of the past failure, but the Viceroy insisted. Two priests and a Brother were sent; one of them was Fr. Jerome Xavier, the nephew of St. Francis Xavier; the Brother was the famous Benedict Goes, who later made the overland trip from India to China. At this time Akbar completely abandoned the practices of Islam. Moslems were persecuted and the Koran was forbidden. But the Mogul remained a pagan with Hindu leanings. In 1599 Fr. Xavier gave an ultimatum to Akbar but he still vacillated and procrastinated. He died in 1605 neither a Moslem nor a Christian. This incident shows a new attempt in India to get away from the established Portuguese centers to work among the people directly. It was a vain attempt in this instance.

THE BRAHMINS

39. The effort at accommodation to the caste system was begun by Robert de Nobili. In 1605 he was sent to work with the Portuguese Fr. Fernandez, in Madura. Fernandez had converted no adults in fourteen years and had baptized only a few "in articulo mortis." It was a mission outside the Portuguese domain but it had been almost fruitless. The difficulty in all this period was the identification of Christianity with Portugal in the minds of the people. The converts left their castes and so lost their nationality. They were despised by their fellow Indians for whom the Christians became almost another despised caste.

40. De Nobili decided to work among the higher castes. He refused to allow himself to be called a *Prangui*, the word given to Christians with the connotation of contempt. He assumed the name and character of a *sannyasi* which is the Indian for a religious man. Furthermore, he went under the title of a *guru*, the Indian for teacher.

41. Fr. Fernandez considered this close to apostasy. He complained to superiors against the new method of de Nobili whom he completely misunderstood and misrepresented. Because de Nobili separated himself from the lower castes and adopted the mode of living, dress and food of the Brahmins, Fernandez concluded unjustly that he was separating himself from the Faith. So strong was this rumor that it reached the ears of St. Robert Bellarmine in Rome, a relative of de Nobili, and the Cardinal wrote pleading with the missionary to abandon his ways and return to full communion with the Fold.

42. De Nobili tried to explain why he assumed the title of a *guru* and *sannyasi*, why he refused to associate with the *Prangui*, why he used the fact of his noble blood, and the reasons for caste distinction. He maintained that the door to India was closed by the methods thus far followed and that it would be opened by a new method. He studied the native language and became very proficient in Sanskrit, the language of the Indian writings. He

was probably the first European able to handle that language. He may have been inspired in his desire for accommodation by the methods of Fr. Ricci in China.

43. His idea was not merely the conversion of individuals but the christianization of the whole environment. Because the prestige of Portuguese arms and authority counted for nothing outside the Portuguese areas, he deemed it necessary to gain the influential classes, a recognized method of evangelization. To alienate or neglect them would ruin any hope for success. The most influential were the Brahmins who were particularly hostile because they despised the Pranguis who disregarded the fact of the castes. De Nobili decided on that account to draw away from the Portuguese and the Prangui, in order not to offend against the usages of caste which Christian dogma and morals seemed able to tolerate. Hence he came among the Brahmins as a Roman noble or rajah, to which classification he could honestly lay claim.

44. He renounced the ordinary mode of life and lived the strict regime of the *sannyasi*, separating himself from Fr. Fernandez, studying the language, investigating the literature of India, seeking points of contact with Christian teaching or arguments to refute the errors of paganism. He adopted the robe of the native religious man and conducted himself as a respected *guru*. Soon the Brahmins began to come to him and to discuss with him. He became a rigid vegetarian, according to the custom, and avoided all infractions of the usages of the caste. He was convinced from his study that in the castes there was a religious and pagan element which had to be eliminated, and a social and psychological element which it would be permissible, under the circumstances, to tolerate.

45. He attracted to himself by stimulating intellectual curiosity, discussing theological and philosophical problems with his inquisitors. He did not demand that his converts reject all the customs of caste but permitted certain things which, from his deep knowledge of their books, he considered uncompromising to true

religion. He was eminently successful in his conversions among the Brahmins.

46. But his success provoked the anger of other Brahmins who tried to have him expelled. Catholic missionaries suspected his methods and denounced him to the Inquisition at Goa. For twelve years he defended his case and succeeded in winning his adversaries to his side. As Fr. Charles says, no one today would think of adopting de Nobili's method but the principle which inspired him is more than ever justified—prudent and vigorous adaptation and accommodation. He anticipated what has become the prevailing strategy of the Church in this matter.

THE MALABAR RITES

47. Under de Nobili's influence many of the missionaries tended to suppress the purely European characteristics of Catholicism and to accommodate the Church to local conditions. The natives despised the Europeans. The reason seems to have been because the Europeans despised their customs and practices. In order to advance the hope of wide evangelization, the missionaries adopted the native manner of life and respected all customs which were not certain to be condemned by Catholic teaching.

48. Their accommodations were denounced at Rome, and Charles de Tournon was sent by the Holy See as a legate in 1703. He had no chance to deal directly with the missionaries concerned and he spoke no native tongue, not even Portuguese. He had to rely on second-hand information. He issued a decree condemning many permitted practices under pain of suspension and excommunication. The Archbishops of India appealed to Rome for mitigation of these decrees, but the Roman Inquisitor confirmed de Tournon's decrees until the Holy See should be able to investigate the problem more completely.

49. Some of the things condemned by de Tournon were: the omission of saliva at the baptismal rite; the giving of pagan names or the names of deities; too long delay between birth and baptism of infants; child marriage and the wearing of the taly

cord; the celebration of the age of puberty for young women; the refusal to bring the sacraments to the pariahs in their homes.

50. The missionaries responded: the omission of the saliva and breathing in baptism had been granted by the Primate of India because these things were considered on the same level as excrement by the people; they never gave the names of pagan deities but only of ancestors, as was a custom in Europe too with such names as Hercules, Achilles, Caesar, Scipio, Flora; they did translate Christian names into Tamil, for instance Peter was Rajen—foundation-stone; they had to postpone baptism of infants because of the difficulty of travel and until the mother should be able to come with the infant; marriages were contracted at the age of eleven but the partners did not live together until they reached maturity and then only after renewed consent; the missionaries considered the taly cord the equivalent of a nuptial ring but allowed no idol to be suspended from it; the festival celebrating puberty was allowed only for young women already married; with regard to the pariahs, the native customs were so strict that to have acted in any other way would have ruined the whole missionary effort.

51. Several Popes studied and tried to solve the problems. Clement VIII issued a brief, in 1734, permitting the omission of saliva for a period of ten years but condemning the missionaries for having allowed the custom to be introduced without consulting the Holy See. He also recommended the use of names from the Roman martyrology. He accepted the explanation given for the use of the taly cord and tolerated the puberty festival.

52. The problem of the pariahs was not solved. In 1744 Benedict XIV gave a final decision and recommended special missionaries for the pariahs. Ten years were given by this final decree to wipe out the usages once allowed and a threat was made of replacing the Jesuits with other missionaries if results were not forthcoming. Disobedience of the decree would mean *ipso facto* deprivation of jurisdiction and the obligation of returning to Europe. Oaths were imposed on all missionaries.

53. The divergences in method and opinion which had become so grave were solved by the Holy See in the condemnation of the accommodations which had been made. Thus the Holy See maintained cohesion in the work of the Apostolate. This attempt at accommodation was nullified. However, the principle of accommodation was not condemned, since it has received greater attention and insistence from the Holy See in recent times.

CEYLON

54. The first Portuguese contact with Ceylon was made in 1505 when a storm drove the fleet of Almeida into the harbor of Galle. The island was ruled by a number of princes and some of them became Christians. It has often been repeated by Protestant historians that the conversion of Ceylon was due to Portuguese arms. But that is not true, though it was true for some other places. Christians were favored, as in other colonies, but no proof can be adduced of violent conversion.

55. Three of the native rulers are known to have been baptized, the rulers of Kotte, Kandy and Trincomalee. Most prominent in the field of conversion were the Franciscans, who were given charge of Ceylon by the crown. Other religious groups worked in Ceylon, the Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits. Thousands of converts were made. At the beginning of the 17th Century the mission was flourishing. The Franciscans had more than 50,000 converts in the first forty years of this century. The Jesuits counted 32,000 in their stations. In the kingdom of Kotte the Franciscans had over 70,000 Christians.

56. However, the 17th Century witnessed the waning of Portuguese power in the East. The Dutch began to take over. In the late 1650's they seized Galle, Colombo, Manar and Jaffne, expelling the Portuguese. Their policy was a persecuting one. They placed the death penalty on all priests and on those who harbored them. Catholic churches and chapels were converted into Protestant centers of worship. Everything possible was done to wipe out all vestiges of Catholicism.

57. The Faith was likely saved by the toil of a Goanese Oratorian, Fr. Joseph Vaz, who journeyed about the island in various disguises strengthening the Faith of the Catholics. Other Oratorians were sent from Goa to assist him and a center was established in friendly Kandy beyond the power of the Dutch. Ceylon was brought to the Faith by a hundred years of Portuguese missionary effort. It was saved for the Faith, in the face of persecution and the Dutch policy of extermination, by Indian Oratorians.

BURMA

58. The first effort in Burma was made by the Franciscans who labored around Pegu in the middle of the 16th Century. Dominicans and Jesuits came to this field later. But the Christian communities were small and success very limited because of the prevailing unsettled conditions in the country. The mission of the Barnabites was begun in the 18th Century and continued through most of the century. The results were not encouraging though the work was distinguished by great courage and perseverance. Whatever converts there were seem to have been drawn from the Buddhists, and little is known of any effort among the primitive tribes in the hills and mountains of Burma.

3.

St. Francis Xavier

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

59. Francis Xavier, a Basque and one of the first companions of St. Ignatius in the recently founded Society of Jesus, came to Goa with an expedition under Governor de Sousa in May, 1542. He had been appointed Apostolic Nuncio to all the islands and territories of Asia by a brief of Pope Paul III in July, 1540. This charge included care of both colonists and non-believers. Xavier's letters indicate that he must have been officially requested by the King of Portugal to make a survey of the field, because several of his letters to this monarch are of that nature.

60. When he first arrived he worked around Goa but seeing little chance there for conversions he went to the Fishery Coast. Many of these people were Catholics, but he discovered that they knew only that they were Catholics and little more. He remained a year among them. In January, 1544, he went to Cochin because he had heard that there was a possibility of large conversions if he could reconcile the rulers of the region who were in dissension. He effected a reconciliation which did in fact lead to many conversions. In his letters to the King, he urged the punishment of officials who refused to cooperate with the missionaries and spoke of the difficulties and scandal obstructing the spread of the Faith. The colonials were motivated to a large extent by greed and the desire of booty.

61. Xavier received word that the rulers of the Moluccas were favorably disposed toward Christianity and had sent to Malacca asking for missionaries. In his capacity as Nuncio and Superior of the Jesuit missions, he decided to investigate this report. In September, 1545, he went to Malacca and from there set out on a tour of the Moluccas, touching at Macassar and Amboyna. He returned to Malacca where he discovered that the Portuguese were trafficking with the Chinese and he decided to wait for the return of the commercial fleet at the end of 1547. The commander of the fleet was a friend of Xavier and on board was a Japanese youth named Angiro who gave the missionary first-hand information on Japan.

62. This event was to have an important bearing on the future of Xavier. A new world was opening up to him and he had hopes of a great harvest of souls. He left Malacca and spent a year in India visiting the missions of the Fishery Coast, Travancore and Goa. But he had determined to go to Japan. Angiro, the Japanese, accompanied Xavier and was baptized in Goa.

The saint's letters at this time were more mature and the fruit of experience was manifest in them. He writes of the sad state of affairs in India and has little hope that the commands of the King of Portugal will be fulfilled. He was desolate on account of the hopelessness of things and his dreams were of Japan, dreams conjured up by the information given by Angiro.

63. In May, 1549, he went to Malacca with his Japanese convert and a month later left for Japan, arriving in Kagoshima on August 15. He went to Kyoto, one of the great religious centers, and there entered into discussion with the Bonzes. Only a few converts were made by him, but his hopes were firm and he learned a great deal for the instruction of his own brethren who would later take up the work in Japan and reap a rich harvest. While in Japan he learned of the great respect which the Japanese had for the Chinese. Then he realized that if he was to convert Japan effectively he must work for the conversion of China.

64. Once again his whole horizon changes and he left Japan for India in October, 1551. In the meantime he had been appointed the Jesuit Provincial of India and was returning to visit his confreres, to arrange the affairs of the mission, and to appoint new superiors. The determination to go to China urged him East again and he arrived at Malacca in April, 1552. There he was delayed by the jealousy and opposition of the Governor, de Ataide. This man would not grant passage to Xavier who then used his extraordinary powers as Nuncio to excommunicate him. Finally his passage was arranged and in August Xavier came to the island of San Cian, off the coast of China. But his plans and arrangements were unrealized because he died, after

months of waiting almost alone on the island, at the beginning of December, 1552. He had spent ten years in the Orient.

65. To understand Xavier and to form a fair judgment of his life certain elements must always be kept in mind. First of all, he was the Apostolic Nuncio to all the Orient. He was superior of all the Jesuits and the official visitor of their missions. As Nuncio he had to report on the present condition and future hopes of the missionary work. This meant that he had to have first-hand information and experience. He had to discover strategic points for the spread of the Faith. Wherever he went, Portuguese commerce was there before him. He was an apostolic explorer and trailblazer by his very commission.

66. As Superior of the Jesuits he had to be familiar with the missionaries and their work. As their Visitor he had to investigate progress, failure and defect. His journeys were indeed many; he traveled at least 30,000 miles around the Orient by boat and must have gone other thousands of miles on foot. But his journeys were not aimless. His goings and comings always had an apostolic motive and reason. They were prompted by a greater hope for the Faith and by the obligations of his offices. He was seeking a base for the whole mission to the Orient. He was looking for a strategic point which he did not find in India. At the end of his life he felt that China was the point of attack which he had been seeking for years. To this day one must say, it seems, that China is still the strategic point for the Orient.

67. St. Francis Xavier died before the realization of his strategy, but it would be followed by later missionaries. He did leave India and, it would seem, it was because he had every reason for believing that the hope of the Faith was not there. As far as we can discover, he did not see the tremendous problem of conversion involved in the caste system. Though sent out to India by the King of Portugal, he constantly sought places beyond the jurisdiction of the Portuguese officials. It was his constant effort to send missionaries to the places he had visited in order that they might follow up and solidify his own work.

68. It appears that he always sought to adjust his method to the people and he made provision for teaching in the language of the people. His over-all method was to go to the rulers and influential persons in order to obtain from them freedom for the preaching of Christianity, thus to found a mission on a legal and impressive basis. His life was filled with hardship, opposition and disappointment. He was holy and filled with a consuming zeal. As a tireless leader he opened up vast territories where he himself had labored and tried to lay the foundations of future missions. He has been made a patron of the Missions by the Holy See.

Study Outline

By Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.

PART 1. PARAGRAPHS 1-10

The 13th Century marked the beginning of the missionary activity of the Church. It was headed by the mendicant Orders who entered the Near East, Persia, Mongolia, China and Northern Africa. The era of discovery and exploration came in the 15th Century, with Spain and Portugal playing leading roles. Exploration meant not only land and gold, but missionary efforts among the natives in pagan lands. The Popes gave the Kings of Portugal title to different lands in order to encourage missionary endeavor. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI drew a line of demarcation north to south a hundred leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde. Lands discovered west of the line belonged to Spain; those to the east went to Portugal. So the Holy See placed the obligation of evangelizing the inhabitants of the newly discovered lands on these two powers. They were to select and send missionaries into their new possessions. With the obligation went certain rights, among them the *Jus Patronatus* of Spanish and Portuguese kings. From this it is clear that missionary activity was part of the movement of discovery and exploration.

Missionary activity followed fast upon the discovery of the Congo River in 1482. Dominicans, Franciscans and members of the Congregation of St. John the Evangelist entered the Congo at different periods, and the King of Congo and his family accepted the Faith shortly after 1491. Between 1508 and 1521 Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and diocesan priests came to the Congo. In 1518 Henry, the son of King Alphonsus, was named Bishop of Utica. By 1570 missionaries had been driven out of the Congo and the country relapsed into paganism. Missionary activity revived, however, and in 1640 the Holy See made the Congo a Prefecture Apostolic and placed the Capuchins in charge.

Questions

PART 1. PARAGRAPHS 1-10

Who were the first in the mission field of the 13th Century?

What four causes contributed to the exploration movement of the 15th Century?

Name the first great exploring nation.

What significance has the Papal attitude toward the Portuguese kings?

What did the Bull *Romanus Pontifex* declare?

Name the first colonial diocese.

What was the first See in the colonies of the Far East?

What is the meaning of The Line of Demarcation of Alexander VI?

What obligations did the Holy See place upon the kings of Spain and Portugal?

What privileges accompanied the obligations?

What was the *Jus Patronatus*?

What do the privileges granted the Spanish and Portuguese rulers prove?

To what groups did the missionaries of the Congo belong?

Who was named Bishop of Utica in 1518?

When the Congo was made a Prefecture Apostolic in 1640, to whom was missionary activity given?

Study Outline

PART 2. PARAGRAPHS 11-22

The Angola mission began in 1520, after the Congo. It was a failure until 1578. In that year one of the native princes was converted. In 1584 the king was baptized with 1,000 of his subjects. In 1596 there were 20,000 Christians. It was not until the 17th Century that the mission was fully developed.

The East Africa mission from its beginning met with strong Moslem opposition. St. Francis Xavier, on his way to India, did some missionary work in Mombasa. At the end of the 16th Century the Augustinians were in the Mombasa field. However, Moslemism was the great stumbling block and the Zambesi mission faded out.

The Madagascar mission was started by the Dominicans in 1540, and by 1558 all the missionaries had been martyred. In 1616 Father Mariano, a Jesuit, resumed mission work here. He was driven out three times and the mission finally collapsed in 1674.

At the time of the Portuguese explorations, the kingdom of Prester John was thought to be located in Abyssinia. In 1567 Oviedo and a few missionaries landed in Africa and established a mission in the kingdom of the Negus. After twenty years of labor Oviedo died and the mission died with him. In 1604, Paez, who may be called the Apostle of Abyssinia, revived the mission. He baptized the king, Za-Dagal; and the king's successor, Selten Segued, also was converted. He fell into schism but before his death returned to the Faith. Schism was the plague of the Abyssinian mission. Then, too, the close association of the missionaries with Portuguese officials harmed mission work. By 1632 all missionaries had been killed who did not obey the king's decree of expulsion. The Abyssinian mission was a failure.

The Portuguese arrived in India in 1498 and the Church has been there ever since.

Questions

PART 2. PARAGRAPHS 11-22

- How successful was the Angola mission up to 1574?
In what century was the Angola mission well developed?
What great missionary worked in the Mombasa field?
Why was the work of the Zambesi mission never successful?
Who were the first apostles of Madagascar?
Who was the Jesuit missionary to Madagascar?
How did his work prosper?
Where was Prester John's kingdom supposed to be?
Why was the country difficult of access?
What was the first attempt to enter Abyssinia?
Enumerate the principal reasons for the failure of the Abyssinian mission.
How long has the Church been in India?
How large is the present Catholic population?
Who were the missionaries with Vasco de Gama?
Who accompanied Cabral?
What was the success of the Fishery Coast mission?
Why was missionary effort confined to colonial centers?
What was the extent of the jurisdiction of the first Bishop of Goa?

Study Outline

PART 3. PARAGRAPHS 23-38

The first Franciscans came in contact with the Malabar Christians, on the southwest coast of India. They claimed a tradition going back to St. Thomas the Apostle. They were not heretical when the Portuguese arrived. Great trouble was caused among these people because the Portuguese insisted in their adopting the Latin Rite. Portuguese nationalism did a great deal of harm also. Dislike grew and the Malabars turned more and more to the Chaldeans. The Goa Inquisition was always suspicious of the Malabars. While it is true that traces of Nestorianism were found in the books of the Malabar Church, the Malabars wanted to be true Catholics. The errors they were guilty of stemmed from ignorance.

The stumbling block to the progress of the Indian missions was the evil life led by many Portuguese. The Jesuits were so disheartened by this that they wanted to abandon the Indian missions. Their General, James Lainez, told them to stay at their post. The kings of Portugal decided the mission policy. Some phases of it were harsh and only antagonized the natives. The natives identified Christianity with Portugal, and so either rejected it, or adopted it externally for human motives. Then, too, missionaries were not well trained for their apostolate, and often their work was superficially done. No attempt was made to train a native clergy.

An attempt was made, in 1576, to convert the great Mogul, Akbar. This ruler was vacillating in his religious interest. The missionaries concluded that Akbar wanted to found a religion of his own, and so they withdrew from his territory. Mission work was resumed, however, on two later occasions, but when Akbar died in 1605, he was neither a Moslem nor a Christian. This was the first attempt to get away from the Portuguese mission centers.

Questions

PART 3. PARAGRAPHS 23-28

Who were the Malabar Christians and who was their first missionary?

What do recent documents prove about them?

What was the effect of the Portuguese insistence on the Latin Rite?

How were the natives affected by Portuguese nationalism?

What did the Synod of Diamper decree?

Why were the Italian missionaries received by the natives?

How did the Goa Inquisition regard the Malabars?

Why did some of the books of the Malabar Church contain Nestorianism?

What was the big stumbling block to the conversion of the natives?

What were the Jesuits prevented from doing by their General?

State the royal policy toward the missions in India.

Were the Portuguese mission centers exclusively missionary?

How did Portugal apply the religious policy of Europe to the colonies?

How did the Portuguese regard the Indian castes?

Converts were often given Portuguese names. How did this affect the natives?

How well prepared were the missionaries for their work?

How would you characterize the Christianity established under the royal system?

Could Christianity have been established in any other way?

Was the problem of a native clergy solved?

Study Outline

PART 4. PARAGRAPHS 39-68

Father Robert de Nobili was the pioneer missionary among the Brahmins. He became a member of that caste. He claimed that only in this way could converts be made among the Brahmins. Up to his time no conversions had been made. His fellow-missionaries objected to his technique and he was denounced to the Inquisition at Goa. For twelve years he defended his position and finally won over his opponents. His principle of adaptation and accommodation has become the prevailing strategy of the Church.

Following de Nobili, many missionaries dropped the European habits of Catholicism and accommodated the Church to local conditions. They were denounced to Rome, and Charles de Tournon was sent by the Holy See as Legate to India. He forbade many practices that had been adopted by the missionaries. The Archbishops of India protested his action to the Pope. Several Popes tried to solve the knotty problem. While some accommodations were condemned, the principle of accommodation was sustained.

St. Francis Xavier came to India in 1542. He was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to all Asia. He first worked at Goa. Then he went to the Fishery coast where he remained a year. In 1544 he labored in Cochin. His next missionary field was the Molucca Islands which he toured in 1545. By 1547 he was back at Malacca. After this he spent a year in India, visiting the Fishery Coast, Travancore and Goa. On August 15, 1549, he landed in Japan. By 1551 he was back in India. In 1552 he started for China, arriving at the island of San Cian, off the China coast, in August of 1552. There he died in December. He had spent ten years in the Orient.

Questions

PART 4. PARAGRAPHS 39-68

What was Robert de Nobili's missionary plan among the Brahmins?

How did his fellow-missionaries react to this plan?

Was de Nobili's plan merely the conversion of individuals?

Describe de Nobili's manner of life.

What was his conclusion about the caste system?

What effect did his success have upon some Brahmins, and missionaries?

State Father Charles' view of de Nobili.

What brought Charles de Tournon to India?

What customs did he condemn and what answer did the missionaries give?

How did the Holy See settle the principle of accommodation?

Was Ceylon converted by Portuguese arms?

What effect did the Dutch have on the missions?

Explain the apostolate of Father Vaz.

How successful was the Burma mission?

How extensive was St. Francis Xavier's jurisdiction?

What type of Catholicism did he find on the Fishery Coast?

What was his opinion of many Portuguese officials?

What part did Angiro play in the life of Xavier?

What determined Xavier to go to China?

What delayed Xavier's Chinese voyage?

How long did Xavier spend in the Orient?

How did Xavier's position as Nuncio and Provincial affect his missionary technique?

What place did Xavier choose as the strategic mission base?

Summarize Xavier's missionary strategy.

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The study outline and questions for *Early Portuguese Missions*; *St. Francis Xavier* were formulated by Gerald C. Treacy, S.J., who has prepared study club editions of various encyclicals.



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